

TOMPKINS COUNTY NATURAL INFRASTRUCTURE CAPITAL PROGRAM

Program Guidelines

The Natural Infrastructure Capital Program provides funding to protect natural systems that can help mitigate the adverse impacts of climate change. At this time, the focus is on: 1) mitigating the potential for downstream flooding and sedimentation, and 2) establishing important migratory corridors to enable plant and animal species to be more resilient in the face of a changing climate.

Eligible Applicants and Funding

- Local governments and non-profit 501(c)(3) organizations that have been operational for at least three years and have proven capacity to own, hold, and steward land for conservation purposes. Other entities interested in accessing this funding should contact the Tompkins County Department of Planning and Sustainability (TCDPS) to determine if they would be eligible to apply for these funds.
- The County cost will not exceed one-third of the most recent assessed value of the land that is eligible for this program, as valued by the County Assessment Department, up to a maximum of \$200,000.

Eligible Projects

The proposed project must meet all of the following minimum requirements:

1. The project must result in the long-term protection of the resource through fee-simple acquisition or a conservation easement being held on the property;
2. The property owner is a willing participant;
3. A qualified public or not-for-profit entity will be responsible for holding title or easement on the property, including future management and stewardship;
4. The project will provide permanent protection of the resource;
5. The project is at least partially located within:
 - a. A Natural Features Focus Area or Priority Protection Area as defined in the Tompkins County Conservation Plan or
 - b. An area of high habitat connectivity value as defined in the Tompkins County Habitat Connectivity Plan or
 - c. An area of high scenic, recreational or trail value;
6. The project is not the result of complying with local land use regulations that require the preservation of open space as part of a development proposal.

Project Selection Process

1. Projects should be submitted to TCDPS, where they will be screened on a rolling basis for project and applicant eligibility;
2. Eligible projects will be evaluated by TCDPS and the Natural Infrastructure Committee of the Planning Advisory Board (PAB) to determine the proposed project's ability to fulfill the program purpose;
3. If TCDPS and the Natural Infrastructure Committee recommend a project be funded, the proposed project will be reviewed by the full PAB;
4. Pending support from the PAB and the Commissioner of Planning and Sustainability, the project will be presented to the relevant County Legislature committee;
5. If approved by the Legislature committee, the project will go to the County Legislature for final approval;
6. If approved, the applicant will be notified as such and the project will move forward in full compliance with County procedures for contracting for capital projects; project funds will be administered by TCDPS.

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